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State unveils one-stop pandemic flu Web site, updates Pandemic Influenza Response Plan

(Juneau, Alaska) — Do you know the difference between avian flu and pandemic flu? How about seasonal flu? What is H5N1? How do you **prepare** for a pandemic flu outbreak? A new Web site unveiled today, www.pandemicflu.alaska.gov, offers Alaska organizations, businesses and residents information that can be used to plan and prepare for the possibility of an influenza pandemic. In addition, the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Division of Public Health has updated its *Pandemic Influenza Response Plan* to prepare for and respond to an influenza pandemic. The plan can be found at www.pandemicflu.alaska.gov/panfluplan.pdf.

“This Web site is a one-stop source of information for Alaskans about pandemic flu, and provides information about how to prepare for the possibility of a global outbreak,” Public Health Division Director Dr. Richard Mandsager said. “The *Pandemic Influenza Response Plan* serves as a guide for local healthcare partners, response agencies and businesses in the development of local pandemic influenza response plans. It defines roles, responsibilities and actions of key stakeholders.”

The www.pandemicflu.alaska.gov site draws information from national response plans and resources available on the federal pandemic flu Web site, www.pandemicflu.gov, and augments with Alaska-specific information compiled from various state agencies and DHSS.

The *Pandemic Influenza Response Plan* is continually updated and will undergo further revision as new information becomes available. The plan was updated to reflect the National Pandemic Influenza Plan which was not available when the original Alaska plan was developed. Additionally, the new layout and design is better suited for use by local jurisdictions to use as a reference in developing their local plans.

The Alaska Division of Public Health, working with the Departments of Military and Veterans Affairs, Environmental Conservation and Fish and Game has been leading efforts in the state to educate the public about the difference between pandemic flu, seasonal flu, and avian flu, and to provide local governments and decision-makers with tools and tips they can use to prepare for the possibility of a pandemic.

“Although there is no pandemic, and avian flu has not developed in the United States, it is important for all aspects of society to prepare for the possibility of a pandemic,” Dr. Mandsager said. “Scientists and public health experts agree that we cannot stop an influenza pandemic, but we can control and limit disease and death through early detection and a well-planned response.”